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DDI-2663-68

27 September 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel

SUBJECT : Comments on Revised Fitness
Report System

REFERENCE : Your memorandum, dated 27 August
1968, Same subject

1. The circulation of the DDP proposal for revising the Fitness Report provides an excellent opportunity for reviewing the whole issue. It appears to me that we have been depending on the Fitness Report to do too many things.

2. The Fitness Report Guide [REDACTED] refers to the purpose of the Report as "one of the tools used in the selection, assignment, promotion, and management of personnel." It also states that the Report should provide "management and the individual being rated with valid and useful information concerning the supervisor's opinions of the individual's work performance." It seems to me that the primary purpose of providing management information often can be in conflict with the objective of informing the individual. Frequently, this conflict is resolved by the supervisor writing a bland, uncritical Fitness Report. Most of us who review personnel folders have learned to recognize this and form judgments about performance not so much from what is stated explicitly but more from what is implied by contrived language or from what is omitted from the Report. 25X1A

3. These considerations lead me to the conclusion that the basic problem with the current Fitness Report System will not be remedied by the DDP proposal. What is needed is some means of

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providing management with the "realistic", "meaningful", "thoughtful, unbiased assessment" called for in the Fitness Report Guide. I do not believe we can rely on supervisors to provide such an evaluation if it must be shown to the employee. This leads to the suggestion that we should have two separate but consistent reports on each individual. The report shown to the employee would emphasize aspects directly related to performance in his current position; the other for management would cover the broader range of topics listed in the Guide--"his strengths and weaknesses, his training and development needs, his imagination and creative abilities, his supervisory skills, his writing and language facilities, his intellectual and social talents, and ... other qualities, traits, and personal circumstances we need for proper management of his career."

4. In effect this suggestion is related to the DDP proposal that there be a mandatory performance consultation between the employee and his supervisor each year as an action separate from the Fitness Report. The memorandum for the record of this consultation would constitute the report that would be shown to the individual. The need to formalize a requirement that a supervisor consult with his subordinate about performance annually appears to be a sad commentary on the Agency's supervisory skills. Consultation should be a continuous process; no supervisor should save up his criticism and guidance over a year's period for presentation to his subordinate at the time of an annual Fitness Report or mandatory performance consultation. Although the topic of employee supervision is more fundamental than the Fitness Report, it appears that we have been attempting to overcome the shortcomings of supervision by improvements in the Fitness Report form itself.

5. The DDP suggestion that a three-point scale be substituted for the present five-point scale seems to be little more than a recognition that the Fitness Report ratings, except for extremes, have lost much of their intended meaning. Rather than eliminate what could be useful distinctions, I would prefer to see greater adherence to the philosophy and directions on the present rating system as expressed in the Fitness Report Guide.

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6. DDP's proposal to increase the role of the reviewing official has two parts. I concur with the part which deals with resolving critical differences of opinion between the individual and the rater with further recourse to the Career Service. I do not, however, concur with the proposal that the reviewer "indicate the relative ranking of the individual with others in the same grade and type of work." I believe that such ranking should be the task of the Career Service Board concerned rather than a single reviewing official with so much more limited basis for comparison.

7. DDP also suggests that each major duty be evaluated by means of a separate narrative statement as well as one of the three adjectival ratings. I doubt that this proposal will be any more successful than our present system in providing "more useful information for personnel management purposes." This opinion is based on the same kinds of factors described in paragraphs 2 and 3 above.

8. In sum, I do not believe that the DDP proposal for changing the Fitness Report is likely to provide significantly better management information than the present system. The problem, however, is much more fundamental than one of Fitness Reports; it is the problem of having supervisors fulfilling their responsibilities on a continuing basis. Trying to force a solution to this problem through changes in the Fitness Report form is attacking the symptom rather than the basic cause.

9. As a result of this review, I recommend that we consider the following course of action:

- a. The Office of Personnel draft a two-part "Fitness" Report and associated guidance for our consideration (see paragraph 3 above);
- b. Either the Inspector General or the Offices of Personnel and Training study the problem of first- and second-line supervision, report to us on the major deficiencies

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in the supervisor-subordinate relationship, and recommend actions and training necessary to remedy these deficiencies;

- c. In the interim, the present Fitness Report System not be changed in any fundamental way except strengthen the role of the reviewing official. Executive action should be taken at all levels to foster greater adherence to the philosophy and directions expressed in the Fitness Report Guide [REDACTED].

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[REDACTED]
R. J. SMITH

Deputy Director for Intelligence

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Remarks: 1 and 2: I have sent the original to [REDACTED] via [REDACTED]. We have one outstanding reply-- DD/S&T. [REDACTED] told Mr. Wattles it's in Carl Duckett's office and we should receive it "soon." Helen					
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13 SEP 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel

SUBJECT : Comments on Revised Fitness Report System

REFERENCE : Your Memorandum dated 27 August 1968, Same Subject as Above

1. I attach a paper written by [REDACTED] which I trust will be helpful to you. For my part I am against change simply because I believe it is easier to read a file in which fitness reports over the years follow the same format.

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2. I recognize the points made by the DDP as having considerable validity; however, I feel that we should not change until a stronger case is made. I would be particularly sorry to see the three level rating scale introduced. The sorting out of the middle group, which is now accomplished by dividing them between the Strong and the Proficient, seems to me to be an entirely worthwhile exercise.

[REDACTED]
Gordon M. Stewart
Inspector General

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Attachment:
As Stated Above